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**Narrator**

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**Interviewer**

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**Video Photography**

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**At the Davis Home**  
**John Day, Oregon**

Elizabeth Davis        -ED  
Janet Worthington     -JW

**JW:** Would you tell us about your connection with Kam Wah Chung, how you came to be involved?

**ED:** They had to select me as a member of the organization that was starting the museum. I was made a member for up until last year. I had to resign, because I couldn't attend meetings anymore, but, anyway that was from the very beginning. We started the museum in 1977. The reason...the beginning of the museum was when gold was discovered in Canyon City in 1862 and Chinese began to come in here and other people too. We had a big population of Chinese people.

**JW:** Could you tell us about anything you remember about the building, or what was in the building, or how the building was laid out as you remember it, how it was set up? As a member of the committee you worked on getting things fixed in the building?

**ED:** We just had that big building and nobody had done anything about it for years. In fact, they didn't even really know that it belonged to the city, until Gordon Glass finally said...found out...he went down there and he found out that it really belonged to the city and he started really doing something about it. That's the way it really got started. He discovered some of the things that were in there and told us about it. He got us started and we were elected as members. I think four or five of us were elected for members.

**JW:** Once they found this they began to set it up and clean things up?

**ED:** Yeah, they moved some things to this old bank building that's downtown and cleaned them up. They got people...and I forget who the people were that they came in...we the members of that didn't have to do that, but we observed them cleaning some

of those things up. They put them back into the museum after they got them cleaned. They were really dusty and bad.

**JW:** Do you remember some of the things you saw being cleaned?

**ED:** Not particularly...any particular things...no.

**JW:** Do you remember the layout of the museum...the store...everything that was in there? This is a floor plan that shows—[Looking at a floor plan]

**ED:** Yes, I remember particularly that big door there. The Chinese thought that there were spirits that came through that door...and it was really door...and there were kids that, kind of, tried to knock that door down...they were really. I do remember that Doc Hay's bedroom was to the left as you go in and his bed and all...some of his clothes were there. As you go in I could see where they worshiped, they had a place back there where they could worship, and you had to pay so much to be able to worship. Of course...on back...then on the right as you go in there were...where they had herbs...they had five hundred herbs. They got 220 of them that they could identify, those herbs that they could use. There were some things...some things that...some of them like ginseng. That time they had opium there and some other things that we...some of them even use it today. In Fact, that house was a warehouse, a temple, a doctor's office, and an opium den, and it was a tea house, a tavern, and a bank, and a post office, and a general store.

**JW:** Wow, multiple purposes.

**ED:** Yes, It was.

**JW:** What do you recall in Doc Hay's bedroom? Do you recall any of the furniture? You mentioned the bed.

**ED:** I remember the bed, of course, later they found twenty three thousand dollars in checks that he hadn't cashed and they were like from fifty cents to many dollars. And they were people that were still around here and we had one of those that was stolen, because somebody knew this person and they stole the check. We got them now where they can't get to them. Unless they cut them out or something...those checks...we've got those checks...twenty three thousand dollars worth of checks were left.

**JW:** Why do you think Doc Hay didn't cash those checks?

**ED:** I'm not sure that he even needed the money...or...I'm not sure why he didn't cash them. He was about blind by the time he died. I was down there seeing Doc Hay after I moved here...I didn't move here...I was teaching in Mississippi and came here in the summer of 1941 when my folks came and some lady took me down there. I couldn't see him, it was so dark in there. But, he did give these kisses to kids...to people...that he had...that he would give them. He used the pulse to find out what was wrong with you, and one lady one time said...well she said, "I had four kids" and he said, "no, you had

five” and then she remembered that she had one that died. So, he was perceptive, and seemed to have ESP, so to speak, back then, we don’t sometimes think you have.

**JW:** You went to him for treatment?

**ED:** No, we just went to see him.

**JW:** Oh, you did?

**ED:** Yes, I never went to him for treatment.

**JW:** When you went to see him, where was he? Was he—

**ED:** He had a chair that he sat in. He never tried my pulse or anything, because that what he usually...he sat down and you...I don’t remember him saying anything...but, anyway, he did...people that did go there...he was called a pulsology man and he did tell what was wrong with you by your pulse. He did cure a number of people, they said, from different things, and he’d even go out to your house and stay with you if you were really bad sick. One man, they said, had a blood disease that he went out and stayed all night or several nights and cured him...Doc Hay.

**JW:** When you went to see him he was sitting in a chair?

**ED:** Yes

**JW:** A straight—

**ED:** No, it was a...kind of...a big chair...similar to that that was there that he sat in all the time.

**JW:** And then the patients came and sat next to him?

**ED:** Came and sat down and he told all about what they did.

**JW:** Could you tell us what he looked like?

**ED:** I could not see him. It was dark! It was dark in there. As a group of people we tried to keep it dark like it had been, because they had smoked opium in there. It was alright way back in the 1800’s to smoke opium...then it became...and they were arrested one time for smoking opium. But, Lung On...he was such a smart man he got the embassy in Washington, or Portland, or someplace, and he got out of it. One time he had to pay a hundred dollars to get out of it, but he was able too. The first electricity was down there in John Day, and he was the first man to have a car dealership, Lung On was. He was really a smart man. Of course, he kind of liked to gamble too, Lung On did, and he liked horse races. He would be gone for awhile and he did lose some money and Doc

Hay would kinda ask him about...well you lost some money...that type of thing. He was called a ladies man too.

**JW:** Did he deserve that title?

**ED:** I think he did, yeah, according to what we heard about him. He must have been. He was a really smart man and he could read good English...and he could...knew all his. His father tried to get him to come back and promised him a really good job if he would come back in one of these letters. He had a kid, he had a girl. Usually, in Chinese, the father has to decide on...if they...about the wedding...he wouldn't go back. Doc Hay had two kids, had a boy and a girl, and they begged him to come back, but they are both buried up there in the cemetery.

**JW:** Could you describe Lung On for us? Tell us about what he looked like?

**ED:** It's hard to really...because I mean...all I know is some of the things that he did when he was there. I'm not sure where he slept. Some people thought that he slept in the back room and according to my figures, they are saying that the back room wasn't started until 1890...they also built another...and that was on the military road at that time. That military road went clear to The Dalles...The Dalles, of course...I mean there was a military road that went through there...well, I'm just not sure about some of that stuff.

**JW:** When you went to see Doc Hay, I understand it was very dark in there, but do you remember any of the other furniture that was in that central room?

**ED:** No, it was too dark at that time. Of course, later on I got to see all that and got to see some of the things where the herbs were. There was things that they gave like snake deals and other deals that...bugs that they gave. There was a thing there that you could weigh this stuff on, the medicines that they would give from these herbs.

**JW:** Some kind of scale it was?

**ED:** Yeah, yeah.

**JW:** Where was that located?

**ED:** They were sitting right there on a table thing right in front of the herbs. Herbs were in the back and they were in the front and all of these were on the front there.

**JW:** Was there any kind of stool, any of that, around the counter where the herbs were?

**ED:** Oh yeah, you could sit on a stool back there, yeah. They had a cleaver and the cleaver, you know, was for protection. In fact, I heard this story once. There was some boys there and Doc Hay had left his bedroom door open, now this is supposed to be a true story, these boys were going to go in there, they thought there might be some money in there they could get, so one of the boys went in and when he did...it's a wonder...he had

this cleaver that he through at him...of course, he never went back. He and his two brothers [unclear] he said they never went back after that, but, anyway he was aware that there was somebody out there. That cleaver he had all the time for protection as well as for his meats and stuff like that that they had...that they ate in the kitchen...some of the things that they had in the kitchen.

**JW:** Was this a large cleaver? Was it—

**ED:** Yeah, huge one, yeah.

**JW:** Huge?

**ED:** A big one, yeah.

**JW:** Would you say two feet, a foot long?

**ED:** Oh yeah, I think it was, I never saw it. That's what they claim, it was a cleaver.

**JW:** Anything else you remember about the location, the place, the outside of the Kam Wah Chung when you went in 1941? What did it look like?

**ED:** It was just and old, old building. I had heard that they thought about tearing it down and this one man said, "no, they should keep it," because it was such an old ugly looking building that they didn't think it was that a nice building to keep, but then they did decided to keep it and they did keep it.

**JW:** Why do you think they made that decision to keep it? What moved them?

**ED:** Because...well...people decided that these artifacts were worth keeping and the things there. In fact, we are told, that we got more artifacts here than anyplace in the whole United States. We have the best artifacts and yet we have lost some of them, but we do have a lot of good artifacts there...that they did...you know.

**JW:** The outside of the building, were there any other buildings around?

**ED:** No, that was the only building.

**JW:** That was the only building that was left there?

**ED:** It was a China Town at one time, we heard. Some people...I may have some pictures of where it looked like some other people were there...it was a China Town. And you...you know what happened at Canyon City? The people up there got tired of the Chinese and they ran them off. They ran them down to John Day. That's why they came down to John Day. Somehow, they didn't like them up at Canyon after...but, they were...the Chinese were at Canyon. One time there was more people here than in Portland, Oregon...more Chinese even...like a thousand Chinese sometimes here.

**JW:** What can you tell us about the store that was there? Do you know what was sold in the store?

**ED:** Oh yeah, I've got some things that were in the store. Let me see—

**JW:** When you went to visit Doc Hay was the store there?

**ED:** Oh yeah.

**JW:** It was?

**ED:** Oh yeah, the store was there and a...let me see I've got—

**JW:** Where was the store in relation to the place of worship? You said, there was a place where people could worship when they came in.

**ED:** The store was right there close to that. It was a place there where they could get things, yeah. Let me see...they had candy, cigarettes, tobacco, and Havana cigars. They had matches, rice, cotton...and...um...they had firecrackers, opium, and Chinese herbs...and...um...these wall back there they had some...um...I forget just what they were...eggs, you know, like they did at Christmas time, I mean at Easter time...they made old, old eggs and I forget how old they were. They also...close to where they had a lot of this stuff, they had playing cards, and dominos, and string coins, and you could tell your fortune with sticks. Some of the goods they had was like, mentholatum, candles, MJB coffee, Lipton tea, peanut butter, they had a mouse trap there that they could...they had candy Easter eggs that said, sold for two for five cents. Some of those things like that. They had all that stuff right there...fairly close to that where there...they worshiped...you know...I don't know exactly how they worshiped, but they did.

**JW:** Who would go to the store? Who would buy things at that store?

**ED:** Anybody that wanted too. The white people accepted the Chinese really well and they would go, because it was a good store and they had stuff that they could sell. They ordered stuff like from China. Some of the stuff would come from China...it'd come through San Francisco and places like that, probably, I don't know if it came from Portland or what...how it got here exactly, but we did used to have ways of communication with them.

**JW:** You said, the people here accepted the Chinese people, there was not any animosity or anything?

**ED:** Not at first. Not like at Canyon City, you know, John Day didn't build up quite as fast as Canyon, because that's where the gold was, and that is where the people were. That is where our Court House is today...you know...in Canyon. John Day was called Lower Town and that type of thing. So far as I know, they were able to accept the

Chinese down here, most of them. We had Chinese restaurants here too...had those after most of...some of the Chinese left...still had Chinese restaurants here.

**JW:** How many Chinese restaurants did they have?

**ED:** Just one restaurant that I heard of. It wasn't here when I came that summer, but I had heard that there was a restaurant here.

**JW:** Could you tell us about Gordon Glass's role?

**ED:** He really got started...I think he must have been on the council for the city. He looked into this. He took some things home. Even took some of that whiskey...they discovered ninety-five bottles of whiskey. He read some of the letters and so forth. I [unclear] the white people maybe saw some of those checks...he went home and he asked the city...realized that it belonged to the city, so he started doing something about it. He's dead now. He lived down in Arizona. He really is the beginning; he should get a lot of praise for being one of the people who really got that started.

**JW:** How did he organize and run things? You said he had a group of you as a committee? Did he make the decisions or did he bring things to you?

**ED:** Well it's the city I think that maybe elected us. He got the city, cause I think he was on the city council. If I'm right about that...that he did...and the city council...they decided that we needed to have a group of people to get it started and that's the way we go it started, but he really was the beginning, and he stayed that way for a number of years until he finally resigned...the head of the thing...you know...president or whatever you call it.

**JW:** So, when you would go to meetings what kinds of things would you discuss?

**ED:** Oh, we'd discuss what they needed to do on the building. Sometimes the building had some faults that needed fixing, you know, and we decided how we would advertise, so that people would know we had a museum here and could come. We had cards that we decided about, and just other things that you would do for...mostly...you know...about the building itself.

**JW:** The funding came from the city?

**ED:** Yeah, Yeah, the funding came from the city up until—

**JW:** Was there a budget that was given for—

**ED:** Yeah, it was a budget, yeah; they had a budget they decided, yeah. Then we got a curator and I think we've had at least three curators, which the one we have now is Carolyn's really good friend of mine and she really knows it from A to Z ...you know everything...you probably hear her.

**JW:** Oh yes, we talked to Carolyn.

**ED:** And she knows everything about that building, more than I could probably think about telling you.

**JW:** Who were the other two curators?

**ED:** I've forgotten what the names...one was a school teacher that I think quit teaching school and she had taken it, but she didn't stay there very long, but I forget what her name was...yeah.

**JW:** And you sometimes substituted as the curator?

**ED:** Yeah, sometimes.

**JW:** What did you do in that role?

**ED:** Well, I just started with the back room; I began to tell them how they started in 1862 when we discovered gold in Canyon City. There used to be a sign between Canyon City and...up there at Canyon City...26 million dollars worth of gold was taken out of there...and...anyway...so, that's one of the things I would tell them, you know. And what else—

**JW:** So, you took tours as the curator?

**ED:** Yeah, one day...this was an odd thing that happened...well I keep a lot of things that I could tell them here [showing her note pad] and if I'd forget something I'd look here and find it, anyway these two people came in late, and I thought...well...just wait and I'll give you a tour and...you know...it happened to be my brother and his wife came. They didn't tell me they were coming and I didn't even recognize them, but anyway, that was really something, something too really laugh about...you know...I was halfway through telling all the things I new about the museum. It was fun, because, you know I'm a teacher and I love telling stories about different things and I really enjoyed the knowledge that I got from down there. This little book is full of that, plus I've gotta whole notebook here that I've kept all of these things through the years, a whole book there about everything.

**JW:** We will have to look at that. That would be wonderful to see. As a curator did you also have to clean and take care of things?

**ED:** No, we didn't have to clean, but now Carolyn, I think, she does some cleaning, but I didn't have to do any of the cleaning or nothing. I just had to be down there at a certain time and take them through as they through. It would be interesting to me, because I would fine out some things that had happened here in John Day I didn't know about that some people would tell me...and...some of the things...in fact...well...some of the



things I don't think we should even mention [Both laughing] that we found out. But, I'm a people person and I love people and I really thoroughly enjoyed being a curator and if I were able today I'd be right down helping Carolyn, you know, when she needed it.

**JW:** Did you incorporate some of this into your classroom? You mentioned—

**ED:** Oh, yeah, sure I did and I always took my class. I taught fourth grade here for nineteen years and I loved the Northwest history and when they said we could come down I always brought my fourth grade. We had three fourth grades. Three fourth grade teachers and three fourth grades, and I'd always bring mine down to the museum and show them, because I thought that is part of John Day, its part that we really need to know about. There are teachers, I hear, I'm afraid never been down to Kam Wah Chung, which is kinda sad, I think. They don't really know what it is all about. But, it is a very interesting place that people ought to know about.

**JW:** Could you describe for us the opening of the museum the first time?

**ED:** I've forgotten, I've forgotten.

**JW:** In the 70's when it first opened?

**ED:** I've forgotten.

**JW:** You've forgotten?

**ED:** Exactly...1977 is when it opened.

**JW:** But, what was that like?

**ED:** See, I've forgotten. Forgotten what it was like when it opened.

**JW:** Was there a big celebration?

**ED:** Not too big a celebration.

**JW:** Not too big a celebration?

**ED:** No, no. It wasn't that big.

**JW:** Do you know about any items that were in the store or in the museum that could be somewhere else now? They are trying to find everything that was in the museum.

**ED:** No, I don't know of any, no. We've collected a lot of them...you know...the Historical Center in Portland, I think may have some of them, or did have some. We've got...we had a lot of boxes of some of the things up in the second story that they moved to the other building called the Heritage Building now that they are renting from the

school. They moved some of those and I don't know...Carolyn was saying...she didn't see...they're all dusty and everything. I don't know if they've ever been through all those boxes that were up there in the second story.

**JW:** Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about Kam Wah Chung or your relationship with the people, or the building?

**ED:** Of course, I enjoyed my time that I was with them and I even bought a tape about Carolyn...when she made that tape, you know. Which a lot of people don't have, but, of course, Carolyn has become a really good friend and even though, she has been there twenty-five years I really didn't get to know her too well...you know...till now. Her children went to school here and my children have gone to school here...finished. I brought mine here when they were like...Jim was six and a half...he just started school...you know...when he started here...finished school here...all three of my kids finished school here...and her kids all finished school here...high school...you know...and then they gone to college.

**JW:** Did you know Bob Wah?

**ED:** I knew of him, but I never really knew too much about him. I just heard that he was one of the ones...yeah. It could have been his mother that burned some of the stuff...papers that maybe they should have kept, but I'm not sure what she burned. Then they claimed one time that their kids got in there and got some firecrackers...you know...there were firecrackers in there that they would get in those window and get the firecrackers and, so forth.

**JW:** When you took over and were on the committee, was there any damage that had been done inside the building?

**ED:** So far as I knew, there hadn't...not too much damage...no...not too much. Yeah, these kids had gone in there, just gotten the firecrackers, but I don't think they had done that much damage, yeah. Because, we had to take that building, you know, and put a whole new floor and everything in it...and we get money...and...you know...when Leon died he had ninety-thousand dollars. Then when Doc Hay died I think he had like forty-thousand and I think it stayed in the bank there for years, and then I think it went to...what do you call that bank it goes to if you don't...what is that bank that they give it too? Anyway, we did get some money back to do that, even though, his kids couldn't get it, because there was a war between us and China and Leon's kids couldn't get it, they could have if they'd come over here, but they never came over. This money...you know...we did get some money to do that with and we were thinking that maybe that some of that money went to some bank they call it, it goes to if you don't receive it. Huh?

**JW:** If it's not claimed?

**ED:** Yeah, and it was some money in the bank, the Grant County Bank it was called. I think Herman Oliver started the Grant County Bank. He was one of the men who had cattle and was quite wealthy, I think, at on time, yeah.

**JW:** Anything else you would like to tell us?

**ED:** [Shaking her head back and forth in a no motion]

**JW:** Thank you very much. You have a wealth of information.